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ABSTRACT

As postsecondary reading and study skills programs advance into the 1980's, there are issues and changes that directors of these developmental programs must face. First, reading and study skills programs must include learning resource centers where students of all skill levels can come and improve themselves. Program staff members discussing long-range plans should consider providing classes for good and poor readers, adding adult basic education and high school equivalencey (GED) classes, creating content area computer modules, teaching adjunct classes with content area faculty, and providing special inservices to meet the needs of business and industry. Second, reading and study skills people need to be knowledgeable and receptive to computer technology. Third, adding a volunteer component to the program would be good for public relations, community development, and faculty support. Evaluation is another issue. Staff must be able to present to the college administration written and objective (computer-analyzed) evaluations of their classes. They should be certain that they have a solid screening procedure so that student skills improve sufficiently before the students enter regular academic classes. Finally, reading and study skills faculty should be aware of new developments in the field and incorporate them into the curriculum. (HOD)

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Efficiency in the 80's in Reading and Study Skills

by Gretchen Starks

Tenth Plains Regional Reading Conference
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EFFICIENCY IN THE 80'S IN READING AND STUDY SKILLS

As post-secondary reading and study skills programs advance into the 1980's, there are issues and changes that directors of these developmental programs must face. Discussion of these issues and some teaching techniques and resources currently available will be discussed.

The reading and study skills program of the 80's must become a learning resource center where students of all skill levels can come and improve themselves. Developmental Education are the two key words. The basic concept of developmental education follows Miller and Prince's definition of development in post-secondary education as "the application of human development concepts in post-secondary settings so that everyone involved can master increasingly complex developmental tasks, achieve self-direction, and become interdependent." (1976, p. 3). Reading and study skills centers must be prepared to meet the learning needs of all students.

Some of the roles they can expect to fill have been predicted by various educators. Astin states that tutoring, programmed instruction, special courses for developing study skills, and self-paced learning should be instituted to enhance students' academic performance. K. Patricia Cross suggests that a combination of mastery learning, coupled with variable credit will allow students to achieve more. Allowing credit for work experience should also be considered. Providing classes for good and poor readers, adding adult basic education and high school equivalency (GED) classes, creating content area computer modules, teaching adjunct classes with content area faculty, and providing special in-services to meet the needs of business and industry should be discussed in long range plans by reading and study skills staff. It may be helpful to institute an advisory committee to help initiate the developmental education outreach concept.

One area that needs particular attention (and awareness) is that of the mini-computers in instruction. Many companies are investing in the development of mini-computer instruction software and a number of companies are considering donating computers to schools. The reasoning is that for every schoolroom mini-computer, three students will buy a home/personal computer. In a number of states, Minnesota, Florida, and Washington, D.C. among them, IBM is testing their new talking computers that teach beginning reading. And when the Technology Act of 1982 is passed (pending in Congress as of September 1982), computer companies will get tax breaks if they donate equipment to schools. Reading and study skills people need to be knowledgeable and receptive to computer technology.

Legislation that would impact post-secondary reading and study skills centers is called the Training for Jobs Act (S.2036), which replaces CETA. This bill would provide remedial education funds for unemployed youth and targeted in-school students. Private industry councils with educational representatives will oversee the spending of monies. Reading and study skills faculty need to get involved at the planning level with these projects and be prepared to expand their services to meet this current legislative thrust.

Many public school districts are funding volunteer programs where resource persons from the community tutor students in reading, math, and writing. Literacy Volunteers of America and Laubach Literacy Action, both headquartered in Syracuse, New York, have been training reading tutors for a long time. Reading and study skills faculty should seek out these resources for use at the college level, particularly if they have an adult basic education or GED component to their program, As an added dimension to a developmental program, a volunteer component is good for public relations, encourages community involvement, and provides faculty support.

Another issue that will get widespread attention in the 1980's is that of evaluation. College administrators are asking, "What good is a reading and study skills program? Why should taxpayers support teachers to assist with the same subjects taught in the regular classroom? What evidence is there to show that a reading and study skills program is really helping to complete regular coursework or help retention?" To answer these queries faculty of reading and study skills programs must collect data to show success. They must demonstrate that their program reduces attrition. They must further show that the reduction in attrition leads to a net income to the college. Assuming that the average student gives approximately $1,000 a year in tuition to the college, if a reading and study skills program makes a difference and that student stays in college, the college could receive a net income of $3,000 in revenue at a four-year institution plus create a need for faculty employment. Staff must collect written and objective (computer analyzed) evaluations of their classes--and then they need to toot their horn to the college administration when positive information is gathered. They should be certain that they have a solid screening procedure so that they improve student skills sufficiently before they enter into regular academic classes. And they need to cooperate with content area faculty in producing special help, whether it be special learning modules (math and nursing are examples), or mini-sessions within the content classroom itself. Tutor programs should be monitored and data collected to show retention of students for specific programs or specific classes. A monumental task it may seem, but necessary to insure future funding and support of reading and study skills programs.

And of course, reading and study skills faculty should be aware of new developments in the field. Content area faculty and employers have expressed concern over student lack of reasoning and critical reading skills.

When planning curriculum, this concern should be addressed. The Journal of Developmental and Remedial Education contains a feature column every issue that shares ideas for developing problem solving and reasoning skills. Art Whimbey has written a book entitled Problem Solving and Comprehension expressly pertaining to this area.

The concept of teaching a student according to his/her learning style is gaining acclaim. Martha Maxwell contends that learning style, field dependence and independence, locus of control and measuring self-concept should be considered when designing educational programs. Ira Epstein from LaGuardia Community College is currently writing a new study skills text that takes into account a student's learning style and is holistic or thematic in nature. The books curriculum is structured to provide students with three levels of support for each reading selection. At the first level students receive an unaltered copy of the reading selection with guide questions. The second level contains a marked copy of the selection with the unaltered copy. The marked copy contains marginal notes that focus on key points. The third level has an unaltered copy, a marked copy, and an additional "process guide" to discuss key points and author's point of view. Texts of the future will probably consider learning styles in their approach.

Some other areas of emphasis in the 80's will be in listening, taking lecture notes while analyzing the non-verbal language of the instructor, and testwiseness. See Appendices #1 and #2 for current approaches to these topics.

In conclusion, reading and study skills efficiency in the 80's must broaden their scope from a remedial to a developmental education center. They must be aware of current issues, techniques, and resources and prepare to implement AND EVALUATE the changes they make.

Appendix 1

BE THE FOCUS TECHNIQUE FOR READING TEXTBOOK MATERIAL

(Patricia Gold & David Yellin, Journal of Reading, March 1982)

PRE-READING DISCUSSION - 20 minutes

1. Teacher selects interesting statement
2. Groups of 3 form. Each takes 2 minutes to say what they know about the statement and then 2 minutes to summarize. One student gives the report to the class.
3. Teacher takes notes on board

SILENT READING - reactive

POST-READING - Discuss how pre-reading was positive or negative.
Teacher takes notes.

Appendix 2

TEST-WISENESS CONCEPTS FOR STUDY SKILLS SERIES
By Gretchen Starks

TRUE AND FALSE:

1. Answer all the questions. You have a 50-50 chance of getting them right.

2. Look for words that indicate a possible true answer:

   most, generally, may, sometimes, some, can, most, tends to, usually, many, few, often, seldom, more, less, good, great, occasionally, little, rarely, probably, and frequently.

   EXAMPLE: T Obsessive-compulsive neurosis usually includes ego-alien thoughts. (psychology)

3. Look for words that indicate a possible false answer:

   only, always, all, never, invariably, absolutely, every, none, best, worst, guarantees, insures, and undoubtedly.

   EXAMPLE: F A clay soil with high organic matter always has a high cation exchange capacity. (agriculture)

4. Note that if a question is partially false, it is all false.

   EXAMPLE: Jimmy Carter came from Georgia, a prominent western state. (history)

5. Note that if something sounds off or out of place, it is probably false.

   EXAMPLE: John Travolta discovered the first law of physics. (physics)

6. Look for statements that use double negatives and know how to comprehend them.

   EXAMPLE: A not atypical shape of a grape leaf is that of a bell. (horticulture)

MATCHING

1. Use the process of elimination to help find an item mate.

2. Use association to give you a clue.

3. Grammatical agreement of both items is a clue.

   EXAMPLE:

   1. Enlarged tendons behind cannon bones caused by severe strain or injury. (animal science)

   2. A toe narrow horse with toes turned in and heels out.

   a. quarter crack
   b. cow-hocked
   c. parrot mouth
   * d. bowed tendons
   e. trappy
   * f. pidgeon-toed

COMPLETION:

1. Write in something as an answer.

2. Note the number of lines.

   EXAMPLE: A country near Australia, known for its sheet ranches is _____ _____. (geography)

3. Note the length of the line.

4. Watch for grammatical agreement of singulars and plurals and "a" and "an". "A" is followed by a word that starts with a consonant; "AN" is followed by a word that starts with a vowel.

MULTIPLE CHOICE:

1. Questions stated in general terms usually call for general answers.

2. The longest alternative is a good bet for "long-winded" instructors.

3. Choose a middle value alternative when numbers are involved.

   EXAMPLE: How many divisions are there on the thimble of a micrometer? (biology)
   a. 10 b. 60 *c. 25 d. none of the above

4. When you come across opposite alternatives, one of them is usually correct.

   EXAMPLE: In a magneto ignition system, the faster the engine goes: (mechanics)

   *a. the weaker the spark will be c. will stay the same
   *b. the stronger the spark will be d. all of the above

5. "None of the above" is seldom used; "all of the above" is more often preferred on tests.

6. If two alternatives mean the same and only one answer is correct, choose neither of these alternatives.

7. Use association.

   EXAMPLE: Interaction between two species which are beneficial and necessary to both species are forms of: (natural resources) .

   a. mutualism b. neutralism c. agnosticism d. none of the above

8. Inter-item clues can give you up to 2-4 answers on the average test. Try to reread your test when you are finished to catch them.

9. Look for specific words that indicate whether a statement is true or false. (See true and false clues)

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